

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today supported a \$50.4 billion disaster relief bill that will to help New Jersey and other states rebuild after Hurricane Sandy, but he sharply criticized the months-long delay in passing the legislation and the politicization of the disaster relief process.

“For tens of thousands of New Jerseyans still struggling to recover from Hurricane Sandy, today’s bill will make a real difference,” Holt said. “But make no mistake: the process by which this bill was brought to a vote was needlessly prolonged and painful. At every step, Republican leaders bent over backwards to accommodate Tea Party radicals who believe that government should not help the victims of natural disasters.”

The House passage of the disaster relief bill concludes a long and arduous legislative saga. On December 28, 2012, the Senate passed a \$60.4 billion disaster relief package by a bipartisan vote of 62 to 32. At the time, House Republican leadership promised Members of Congress from the affected region that the House would consider Sandy disaster relief on January 1 or January 2, before the 112th Congress adjourned. However, late on January 1, Speaker Boehner cancelled votes on the legislation, and the 112th Congress adjourned without passing any disaster relief bill.

After the 113th Congress convened, House Republican leadership chose to divide the disaster relief package into two pieces. The first was H.R. 41, which was enacted on January 6 and which provided \$9.7 billion to the National Flood Insurance Program. The second was H.R. 152, which passed the House today and included \$50.4 billion in funding. In total, the two bills will provide \$60.1 billion in disaster relief funding – nearly the full amount requested by President Obama.

Holt added, “I’m pleased and relieved that this bill has finally passed the House, but we should all be deeply troubled that it passed only over the objections of most House Republicans. For generations, America’s fundamental social contract has held that we help those who, through no fault of their own, fall victim to natural disasters. Today, most House Republicans voted to void that contract.”

The bill provides:

- **\$11.5 billion for the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund**, which funds disaster recovery grants to individuals and governments in the aftermath of major natural disasters. As of January 14, FEMA had approved 56,905 applications for individual assistance related to Hurricane Sandy, providing a total of \$335.6 million in disaster aid. FEMA also had obligated \$122.1 million in federal public assistance funds to aid government entities.

- **\$780 million for Small Business Administration disaster loans**, which provides low-interest loans to support small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and individuals affected by natural disasters. As of January 14, FEMA had approved \$218.8 million in home loans and \$23.6 million in business loans related to Hurricane Sandy.

- **\$13 billion in mitigation funds to prevent future natural disasters in the regions affected by Hurricane Sandy**, including \$5.5 billion in Federal Transit Administration mitigation funds, \$3.5 billion in Corps of Engineers mitigation funds, and \$600 million in mitigation funds for EPA state infrastructure grants and loans for Drinking Water and Wastewater treatment needs. The National Institute of Building Sciences issued a congressionally-chartered report that determined that U.S. taxpayers save \$4 for every \$1 invested by FEMA in smart rebuilding that mitigates future disasters.

- **\$12.1 billion in Community Development Block Grant funds**, which provides flexible grants to help cities, counties, and states recover from natural disasters, especially in low-income areas.

The legislation also includes funds to support Amtrak and Social Services Block Grants, among other programs.